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ABSTRACT

Annotations of ERIC literature on the role of business in the schools are presented in this document. The following 10 items are reviewed: "What Reform Talk Does: Creating New Inequalities in Education," by Michael W. Apple; "Guidelines for Business Involvement in the Schools," by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; "Investing in People: A Strategy to Address America's Workforce Crisis," by the Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency; "Taking a Cue from Business--Schools Can Become More Responsive," by Robert DeBlois; "A Blueprint for Business on Restructuring Education," by Frederick S. Edelstein; "Will Schools Get the Business!" by Will Englund; "An Education Recovery Plan for America," by David T. Kearns; "Business Involvement and Public School Improvement," by Dale Mann; "Partners in Education: An Old Tradition Renamed," by Daniel W. Merenda; "The Compact Project. School-Business Partnerships for Improving Education. Corporate Action Package," by the National Alliance of Business, Inc.; and "Company-School Collaboration: A Manual for Developing Successful Projects," by Sheila Onuska. (LMI)

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
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The Role of Business in the Schools

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The Role of Business in the Schools

1 **Apple, Michael W.** "What Reform Talk Does: Creating New Inequalities in Education." *Educational Administration Quarterly* 24, 3 (August 1988): 257-71. EJ 383 802.

University of Wisconsin education professor Michael Apple provides a critical overview of the ideological context surrounding the increasing application of business values and methods to educational problems. Concerned about "the growing pressure to make the perceived needs of business and industry into the primary goals of the school," Apple discusses the "New Right" tendency in educational policymaking that has moved away from the concept of the school as "a common ground in which democracy is hammered out" and toward "the idea of a competitive marketplace."

The current language of educational reform, he asserts, reflects authoritarian and anti-intellectual attitudes and diverts our attention from the root causes of our problems. For example, the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* identifies the lack of competency in basic skills among high school graduates as a problem, but "the crisis is reconstructed around particular themes: international competition, capital accumulation, a reassertion of 'toughness' and standards."

Apple fears that reformers, by focusing on education's economic utility, will lose sight of the concept of citizenship as a mix of reciprocal rights and duties. He believes schools should teach people how to coexist within a social context. Also, he suggests, more attention should be paid to "the immense inequalities that are so visible in American society."

2 **Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.** "Guidelines for Business Involvement in the Schools." *Educational Leadership* 47, 4 (December 1989/January 1990): 84-86. EJ 400 512.

A special task force of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) met last summer to examine the role of businesses in the public schools. The result was a statement of recommended guidelines for the development of school-business relations and a summary of values the ASCD perceives as essential to quality education: a balanced curriculum, self-direction, leadership, equity, cultural pluralism, education for democracy, and responsible citizenship. At the district level, a well-defined process should exist for reviewing school-business programs to ensure that they respond to identified educational needs, are consistent with existing educational messages, and are assessed by diverse groups as part of an ongoing review procedure.

"In structuring relationships with business," cautions the ASCD, "educators should remember that the state requires students to attend school. This gives educators the responsibility of ensuring that the welfare of their students, rather than the special interest of any particular group, is promoted by school programs." In the past, the task force noted, businesses have supplied materials on topics such as economics, nutrition, and the environment that have proved to be "controversial." The ASCD discourages incentive programs that "tacitly endorse consumption habits" and those that are not related to the school's curriculum message. Awards of pizzas and t-shirts, for example, "tend to support a simplistic view of teaching and learning in which material reward is tacitly accepted as the principal basis for enhancing student motivation."

Although harboring some reservations, the task force is generally supportive of business involvement: "The more business people are involved in making constructive contributions to educational programs, the greater the likelihood that they will encourage the business community to support sound educational practices."

3 **Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency.** *Investing in People: A Strategy to Address America's Workforce Crisis.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1989. 61 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

This report summarizes the findings of a commission formed to address the need for tailoring educational programs to better meet changing work force requirements. Broad recommendations include forming a public/private partnership under direction of the Secretary of Labor and promoting increased "human capital investments" by communities, businesses, and governments. Schools and businesses should work together to help students become aware of, and then obtain, the training that is necessary to pursue various career options. Student grades and scores on standardized tests can assist employers in their hiring decisions. Appropriate incentives can inspire teachers, administrators, and districts.

Nationally, the commission urges a public commitment to lifetime learning and creation of "a business environment that

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encourages employers to invest more in their workers." To achieve this goal, the commission recommends offering corporate income tax credits for education and training expenses, personal tax exemptions for all employer-provided education and training opportunities, and encouragement of multi-employer training programs. The government can help by building programs to "serve the least skilled and most disadvantaged individuals." This can be done by offering basic skills education for adults, increasing funding for the Job Training Partnership Act and for postsecondary training and education grants, and by forming a cabinet-level committee to coordinate human resource policy. To address home/work stresses, the federal government should support community-based child care, increased subsidies for child care expenses, flexible employment scheduling for workers with families, efforts to match jobs and seekers, and innovative approaches to labor-management relations.

4 DeBlois, Robert. "Taking a Cue from Business—Schools Can Become More Responsive." *NASSP Bulletin* 73, 514 (February 1989): 15-21. EJ 385 219.

Although the goals of business and public education are different, DeBlois argues that educators can find clues to restructuring schools by examining the characteristics of successful companies. In business, for example, competitiveness fosters increased motivation and effort. Educators might increase their own motivation by becoming more aware of the ways in which they "are competing with anything that may persuade students to opt away from school." Similarly, a Darwinian "adapt or perish" mentality has pushed many businesses toward smaller size, more effective leadership, and shared decision making—three major goals of educational reform.

DeBlois summarizes the basic ingredients of educational reform: higher standards for students, higher qualifications and better salaries for teachers and administrators, more decision-making in the hands of teachers, less rigid administrative structure, better methods for evaluating teachers and administrators, and improved relations among all school personnel. In all these areas, he argues, schools can profit from the experience of those in the business world.

The concept that "smaller is better" may be especially applicable. Today's successful schools have been found to share qualities that fall into three areas: "autonomy for those dealing directly with students, accountability of everyone in the system, and effective leadership." When they are working in smaller schools, it may be easier for teachers to demonstrate caring and provide students with individual attention.

Smaller schools promote both autonomy and greater individual accountability. These two goals interact well, DeBlois explains, in an environment where all members of the school are familiar with each other and not buried in bureaucracy and numbers.

The emphasis the business community places on effective leadership is applicable to smaller schools, DeBlois says. "Education, by its nature, is value-oriented, and the principal's actions must exemplify those values." In larger schools, good leaders may become buried in administrative duties and in fighting apathy and bitterness. However, smaller schools with shared decision-making among committed teachers allow principals to delegate authority with more confidence and make decisions that are based on a greater awareness of the needs of individual students and staff members.

5 **Edelstein, Frederick S.** *A Blueprint for Business on Restructuring Education.* Corporate Action Package. Washington, DC: National Alliance of Business, Inc., 1989. 51 pages. ED 312 486.

This National Alliance of Business (NAB) report examines ways business might actively cooperate with education. Although approximately 140,000 business-education partnerships currently exist in this country, Edelstein reports that few have achieved fundamental educational changes. Given an increasing need for educational reform and restructuring, the NAB takes the position that "the responsibility for ensuring that restructuring is not a fad but a reality that lies in part with this nation's business leadership."

Business has much to offer public education, Edelstein claims. "Once convinced of the quality of restructuring plans, business can support schools in improving management, planning, accountability, curriculum, instruction, linkages to social services, and staff development." But such advocacy "will not happen unless business people become part of the analysis and decision-making process."

The report consists of examples, interviews with key individuals, survey results, and recommendations for "systemic educational change" that include school-based management, a new emphasis on professionalism and curriculum revision, improved accountability, and linking education and social services. Edelstein views the task as a group effort, where shared values, trust, and credibility are important factors and cooperation is based on

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involvement, action, and experience: "While business may prod, it does not try to take over the educator's lead role."

Those partnerships perceived as the most successful shared these common ingredients: identifiable leadership, broad vision translated into practical objectives, ongoing structure, and an agreed-upon plan of action. While statewide standards should be established to provide a baseline for individual efforts, the primary impetus for "restructuring" must center on increased decision-making for individual schools, departments, and classrooms.

6 **Englund, Will.** "Will Schools Get the Business!" *The School Administrator* 47,4 (April 1990): 8-14. EJ number not yet assigned.

Englund provides an overview of how business leaders are viewing educational reform issues today. While businesses are allocating more money for precollege programs—up to $52 million or about 9 percent of total corporate spending on education—that total is still insignificant when compared to the $195 billion spent in the U.S. each year on elementary and secondary education. Englund says companies are realizing they can best effect changes by "throwing their influence around more than their money."

Businesses are seeking better-educated employees who have a repertoire of skills not traditionally emphasized in the school environment. Today's workers need to have highly developed problem-solving skills and be able to cooperate in team projects to develop creative solutions. While "adopt-a-school" programs are still the most prevalent form of business-school interaction, Englund says more and more chief executive officers are getting involved. These CEOs are aggressively committed to major, concrete changes in whole programs rather than in selected classrooms.

Across the board, business leaders are recognizing that changes cannot happen without investing the time needed to develop trust and gain a realistic understanding of a school's or district's needs. And school administrators must sincerely believe, says Englund, that the partnership will bring about real change. These administrators also should take the initiative in soliciting business expertise where it can be employed most effectively—for example, to redesign incentive systems so they encourage more risk-taking within a district.

7 **Kearns, David T.** "An Education Recovery Plan for America." *Phi Delta Kappan* 69, 8 (April 1988): 565-70. EJ 370 234.

Xerox Corporation executive David Kearns argues that businesses should assume a leading role in education. When businesses have to teach basic skills to their new workers, he argues, they are "doing the schools' product-recall work for them." To avoid this, business should "force the agenda for school reform" or "set its own," one "driven by market forces and accountability."

While Kearns strongly supports restructuring efforts, he also advocates free enterprise and local control of schools. According to Kearns, a public school system "characterized by accountability and performance" should include a "free market governed by supply and demand" in which students and teachers alike are free to select their schools. Educators, he says, should model their new schools after "the smartest high-tech corporations in which decision making is pushed down into the organization," with adequate authority given to professionals and managers.

For teachers to have free market choice and autonomy, Kearns reasons, they must be considered "true professionals" who are granted control over their own materials and methods. Attempts should be made to offset the disparity between schools that are able to afford exceptional programs and schools that can offer only minimal programs that result in more students being locked into dead-end vocational courses. "Every student," he asserts, "has a right to learn the common core of information and skills required by a modern economy and a democratic workplace."

To ensure that those doing the teaching have the most input, Kearns recommends creating magnet systems with district offices as service centers and annual testing programs that ensure performance levels and provide parents with comparative results on all schools. Also, a year-round system would improve students' ability to be absorbed into the work force. Instead of "puttering in the system itself," the federal government should provide for more research that will support educators' efforts.

8 **Mann, Dale.** "Business Involvement and Public School Improvement." Parts 1 and 2. *Phi Delta Kappan* 69, 2, 3 (October, November 1987): 123-28, 228-32. EJ 359 344, EJ 360 784.

In this two-part report, Dale Mann cites results from a survey of superintendents that show the most formal school-business partnerships are occurring in urban areas. In these cases, their primary value is in "reconnecting" schools with the city's power base—business and community leaders who have moved to the suburbs and shifted their attention accordingly. Such partnerships, Mann has found, allow for the kind of dialogue and substantive interaction that promote marked improvement in inner-city education.

In suburban/rural areas, business involvement tends to be less structured because businesses are often regional or very small, making "awkward targets." Also, smaller districts simply may not have the "leadership resources" to organize formal partnerships, or they may prefer not to muddy their funding strategies by drawing on resources from new channels.

In situations "where interaction takes place person to person," Mann reports that "business leaders want to be reasonable." Major, sweeping reforms are not reasonable goals, but a computer lab might be. Typically, assistance takes the form of practical responses to stated needs. Mann sees a need for greater involvement by teachers and principals to better utilize the expertise of small neighborhood businesses.

Looking at 700,000-plus students who drop out each year, Mann has little hope for "interim solutions." Nor does he see business partnerships as "levers of reform." Typically, he says, "relocating plants, de-skilling jobs, and purchasing training are more frequent responses by businesses to the need for school reform than is working on that reform." Instead, Mann sees high value in the less tangible long-term result of enhanced sympathy for education's plight.

9 **Merenda, Daniel W.** "Partners in Education: An Old Tradition Renamed." *Educational Leadership* 47, 2 (October 1989): 4-7. EJ 397 725.

According to Merenda, the executive director of the National Association of Partners in Education, school-business "partnerships" have their roots in the volunteer programs of the fifties and sixties. Today, the most common form still is locally driven by volunteers who serve in classrooms under the supervision of school staff. Typically they are *not* focused on vocational education. Rather, they are aimed at providing "a sound general education" that will generate better educated workers.

At the policy level, leaders from business, education, and the community at large are engaging in public and political debates to

address the overall direction of education. Business expertise is also combining with educator practice to improve specific teaching methods and materials. An example of this is Amoco Co. scientists who are working with teachers and supervisors in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to develop hands-on science activities for students. At a practical level, schools are benefitting in areas ranging from fiscal management to plant management through equipment, supplies, and even executives who are lent to districts by businesses. Employers are also opening their doors and using their staff to help teachers upgrade or acquire new skills and learn more about today's labor market.

Finally, classroom assistance is being provided by volunteers released from their jobs to serve as visiting teachers or tutors. In some cases, businesses are taking students into their own environments. Employees of the Security Pacific National Bank in California, for instance, work with some 200 school districts to help more than 4,500 students receive basic skills training in the bank's offices.

10 **National Alliance of Business, Inc.** *The Compact Project. School-Business Partnerships for Improving Education. Corporate Action Package.* Washington, D.C.: 1989. 83 pages. ED 312 487.

The lengthiest of several National Alliance of Business (NAB) reports on the experiences of business-education partnerships in twelve cities, this document describes each project and analyzes what was learned.

The most significant lesson businesses need to understand, according to the NAB, is that the magnitude and implications of this country's educational problems are greater than most people realize. To make best use of their potential for helping with educational reform, each community's business leaders must orchestrate their efforts in a formalized institutional structure. A new organization may be created for this purpose or an existing organization, such as a chamber of commerce, may be utilized. For such an effort to be successful, the business group must also include highly committed educators and elected officials. Cooperation among these three groups is, the NAB has found, essential.

Once an interest is clearly identified and initial steps are taken toward solving immediate problems, the next stage is commitment to long-term involvement. Crises may be resolved relatively quickly, but genuine reform requires ongoing momentum—"partnerships take time to evolve; trust among the parties takes time to grow." Business leaders, the NAB asserts, must be involved with school governing structures at both state and local levels, but they also must clearly acknowledge the lead roles of the educators. Reform issues are complex. Local participation is necessary to help business people fully understand the challenges. Similarly, educators must be willing to work with them to hasten their learning process.

The importance of clear definition throughout a program is also stressed in the NAB report. "All parties involved must develop agreed-upon measurable goals which clarify intent, focus commitment, and permit periodic assessment. Development of measurable goals builds trust." Finally, the NAB did not find that substantial funding is needed in every case. More important than financial support, it asserts, is the gathering and sharing of information and assistance that can encourage and guide program participants over extended periods.

11 **Onuska, Sheila.** *Company-School Collaboration: A Manual for Developing Successful Projects.* Washington, DC: American Council of Life Insurance, 1987. 62 pages. ED 291 920.

The business community can benefit directly from this manual developed by the staff of the St. Louis, Missouri, Public Schools to help those responsible for school/business programs in St. Louis. Onuska cites examples of successful programs and explains the rationales and principles behind various types of business involvement—such as individualized programs, communitywide efforts, specialized assistance, and the adopt-a-school method. The handbook presents together in an accessible format virtually every action that might need to be considered or taken to ensure a program's success. Specific information is included for the CEO who is contemplating involvement, the manager charged with initiating contact with a school or district, and the employee asked to assist with procedural details.

Step-by-step guidelines help define specific roles, strategies, and techniques from an educator's point of view. The emphasis throughout is on identifying levels and types of commitment, maintaining clear and open channels of communication among all participants, and agreeing on detailed plans and schedules of activities. Also addressed are staff development, career education, classroom activities, special services, evaluation/promotion issues, and special programs such as Junior Achievement and Future Business Leaders of America.

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